

STORIES FROM  
EMILE ZOLA

In his New Orleans days, Lafcadio Hearn made many translations from various French writers, of whom the best known to the American public is Emile Zola. It is singular that he wrote often against Zola whose theories he abominated and whose books he detested, and yet the garbled American translations of which he decried. He nevertheless made quite a number of translations from journalistic work and fiction by Zola. Undoubtedly, the most important translation was the famous story "Fight at the Mill." I have copied this from *The New Orleans Times Democrat*, August 20 and 27, 1882, besides two less known tales translated for the *Democrat* in 1881, "A Peasant's Death" and "A Rich Man's Death." Hearn had been making translations from Zola even while on the *Item*, one of these being a short tale called "My Two Cats" (*The New Orleans Item*, September 28, 1878).

His translations from Zola were made for the most part for the *Democrat* in 1881 and were from literary and journalistic articles of Zola in the French Press. These comprised essays on style and naturalism, such as "A Statue to Dumas," "Republic in Prussia," "Virtuous Women," "Littré as a Physician," "Hugo and Littré," and

"Journalistic Life" Hearn wrote book reviews of Zola's novels often\* and did a biographical sketch of him in the issue of the *Times-Democrat* for December 18, 1882, which has been reprinted here.

ALBERT MORDELL

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Philadelphia, U.S.A.

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\* Several of these are included in the volume "Essays in European and Oriental Literature" edited by the writer

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**EMILE ZOLA;**

**A NOTE**

## EMILE ZOLA

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THE international success achieved by Zola within a comparatively few years, could alone justify the appearance in 1882 of such a biographical memoir as that written by his friend, Paul Alexis, and published by the great Charpentier. Disconnectedly flung together, inelegantly written, disagreeably panegyric, and, on the whole, rather calculated to belittle than to glorify their subject,—these “notes of a friend,” nevertheless, contain a large variety of previously unpublished facts worthy of a better volume, and potent to create a strong sympathy for Zola in the American world. Detached from the mass of badly digested chapters, in which they are fixed, like comfits in a cake of sickening sweetness,—these incidents of Zola’s early struggles are really worthy of study in a country where energy and persistence have achieved such astounding things.

Zola is only partly of French extraction,—his father Francisco Zola being a Venetian with a mingling of Greek and Italian blood in his veins. This Francisco Zola was a civil engineer of uncommon ability, who had achieved professional successes not only in his own country, but also in

Germany, England, Russia, Algeria, and France, where he died of a pleurisy while on the eve of realizing his most cherished projects. After his death the little property left by him was found to be in so entangled a condition that none of it could be secured for his young wife and their young child, Émile. Mother and son thus found themselves left face to face with destitution,—dependent upon the charity of relatives.

Émile had been born in 1840 in one of those narrow and gloomy alley buildings so hideously described by him in after years,—a chasm in the mountainous architecture of Paris. He must have seen during the first weeks of his life much of that noisome life of workshops and of laundries made famous in the pages of *L'Assommoir*. Luckily the relatives of his mother lived long after his father's sudden decease and were able to assist their grandson to obtain that educational training of which he subsequently made so powerful a lever. He passed most of his youth at school, and became very proficient in studies of a practical sort—mathematics, science, natural philosophy,—but never appears to have had any aptitude for modern languages in general, history, or rhetoric. At all events he was miserably “plucked” at the Sorbonne for deficiencies in these very studies, and found himself at the age of twenty, thrown upon the world to make his own way as best he



could, without even the assistance of a collegiate diploma

From 1859 to 1862 the unsuccessful candidate for baccalauréat honors passed through a period of such want as the American idiom "hard up" feebly expresses. The French phrase "black misery," perhaps, depicts it better. Woe to the young man, fresh from college, without money, and without friends, who seeks, unaided, to make his way in the most cynically selfish of all splendid cities! Thousands have entered the mighty struggle to die of exhaustion at the moment of victory, had Zola's been a feeble will or a puny constitution he must soon have fallen by the wayside. His first efforts for employment obtained for him a position at 60 francs a month in the docks—a salary almost impossible to live upon. He abandoned it to join the army of Bohemians. For nearly two years, vainly spent in writing bad poetry, he was lucky to obtain sufficient stale bread and apples to live upon. Visits to pawn brokers, ejections by landlords, seizure of effects, winters passed coatless and hatless,—all the vexations and hardships common to those who attempt to live by their wits, became familiar to him. It was toward the close of this miserable existence that while living in a lodging house occupied only by rakish students and women of the worst class, he conceived the plan of the *Confessions de Claude*—a frightful narrative which impresses itself upon the

mind like the memory of some agony of blood

Finally a faint dawn beamed in his obscure horizon. Powerful recommendations enabled him to enter the great publishing house of Hachette as clerk. His work was chiefly confined to tying up parcels and packing books. But the publisher took a fancy to the young man upon noticing some unusual evidence of sound literary judgment. From packing clerk he became corresponding clerk,—ultimately he was taken into the private office, where he obtained ample opportunity of becoming acquainted with nearly all the great literary celebrities of the time. Of evenings he commenced to study and write for himself, and it was during this period that he composed most of those charming short stories subsequently published in the first volume of the *Contes à Ninon*. But Hachette was not the man to encourage Zola's tendencies to naturalism, however much faith he placed in his judgment regarding books. Zola received a kindly lecture when he presented a long poetical effort of his own for publication, and a story afterward written for one of Hachette's publications at the latter's special request, was suppressed with the curt phrase,—“*You are a rebel*” But the publisher, appreciating the unquestionable talent of the “rebel,” prematurely desirous to attack all pre-existing literary dogmas, raised his salary. That salary, however, did not exceed

\$50 a month, even thus increased

Zola was too wise to offer anything further in the way of MSS to Hachette, but he had now enough stories to form a volume. Some of them had already appeared in the newspapers, others had been rejected—the *Figaro* refused several. Zola found courage nevertheless to carry the whole thing to Hetzel. It was received to his agreeable surprise, appearing in 1864 under the title *Contes à Anon*. Some of the tales rival the best of Daudet's *Contes de Lundi*. Nevertheless Zola got nothing for the book, and although it was highly praised by the press yet ten years passed before 1000 copies were sold. And on the first day of publication, 56,000 copies of *L'Assommoir* were sold.

Still, this first publicity encouraged him to offer Hetzel his *Confessions de Claude*. The book was published, but the *Procureur Imperial* was highly shocked by its audacity, and sent a police agent to inquire about Zola at Hachette's. For this and other reasons Zola resigned his situation.

He had formed a strong resolve to make his living by his pen and there was only one road open to him, the Way of the Press. He had already become a contributor to Russian and Belgian papers. The *Figaro* was then only a weekly and Villemessant, the father of sensational journalism, had just founded a cheap daily as an experiment

to test the future chances of a daily *Figaro*. This experimental sheet was the *Évenement*. Zola, mentally rich with his experience at Hachette's, sought and obtained the position of book critic. His first efforts were so successful that his salary was fixed at \$100 per month, for the few articles thus contributed. The Impressionist school had just begun to make a sensation in the artistic world, and Villemessant asked Zola to criticise the salon. He became the champion of Manet and others, and the articles emanating from him provoked a storm of artistic fury. Such was the heat of public feeling that Villemessant suppressed the series of criticisms before they were fully concluded. No better luck attended Zola's sketches of contemporary celebrities in literature. *L'Évenement* was suppressed, and the *Daily Figaro* established. Zola was still employed, but Villemessant was too shrewd a journalist to give him any further encouragement. The founder of the *Figaro* always followed one policy—namely, to employ a writer only so long as that writer's articles could make a startling sensation. Zola had done this, he had contributed his originality, there was no further real use for him. He soon found it expedient to resign. Thirteen years later, he re-entered the *Figaro* to contribute that series of articles from which several translations have appeared in this paper.

During the long period between 1867, when he left

the *Figaro*, and the appearance of *L'Assommoir* in 1876, Zola had but indifferent success financially, and countless disappointments in his literary ambition. The *Confessions de Claude* had provoked the prefect of morals, Thérèse Raquin published in *L'Artiste* by Arsene Houssaye, was severely criticised as a new specimen of "putrid literature," and its publication in serial form attended with great vexation. *Madeleine Féral*, offered to the new *Événement*, was suppressed when half published. *La Fortune des Rougon*, given to the *Sécle*, was interrupted by the war. *La Cloche* was suppressed by the police for publishing *La Curée*. *L'Assommoir* had to be suppressed by the editor of *Le Bien Public*, but the fury of indignation it provoked encouraged the *Rappel* to publish the rest. Meanwhile Zola had to encounter other vexations. His talent as a critic becoming known, cliques were formed against him, and book reviewers made compacts not to speak well of Émile Zola's work, "unless M. Zola should write a favorable criticism upon the new book of some scribbler of the ring."

But after fifteen years' hard work Zola had succeeded in that most difficult of undertakings for a beginner,—the finding of an influential publisher willing to encourage him. The great house of Charpentier,—publishers of Gautier, of de Musset, of the works of Daudet and Goncourt—took

him up. They even bought from Hetzel the right to reproduce his early works, and made him terms more advantageous than he had ever hoped for. *L'Assommoir* made Zola's fortune, and the Charpentiers were soon enriched. The subsequent history of those naturalistic novels whereof from 100 to 150 editions have been sold, is sufficiently well known. Needless to say that Zola has long given up writing verses, and, judging by the specimens published in this biography, he has done wisely. Nothing could be more vapid.

The striking facts in the narrative of Alexis are those relating to the struggles of Zola. His perseverance survived a surprising series of failures. Success only came to him with the appearance of *L'Assommoir*, previously almost all that he had done was condemned or financially barren, and his journalistic experience was one succession of vexations and disasters.

(*The New Orleans Times-Democrat* December 18, 1892)

**THE FIGHT AT THE MILL**  
*(L'Attaque du Moulin)*

# THE FIGHT AT THE MILL

(*L'Attaque du Moulin*)

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## I

THERE was a great merry making at old Merhier's mill that beautiful summer evening—three tables had been placed in the yard end to end, for the accommodation of the guests who were expected. All the country round knew that the Merhier girl, *Françoise*, was that day to be betrothed to Dominique,—a lad who was charged with being somewhat lazy, but whom all the women for three leagues roundabout used to gaze at with glistening eyes,—so good-looking he was.

Old Merhier's mill was simply delightful. It stood right in the middle of Rocreuse, just where the high road makes an elbow. The village has only one street—two rows of buildings, one row on each side of the road,—but there at the turn, the meadows widen, and the tall trees that follow the course of the Morelle cover the further end of the valley with magnificent shade. There is not a more adorable spot of natural beauty in all Lorraine. To right and left deep woods, century-old trees ascend the gentle slopes, filling the horizon with a sea of verdure, while



southward extends the marvellous fertile plain, unfolding to the infinite its surface of lands and fields enclosed by quick set hedges. But the peculiar charm of Rocreuse is the coolness of that green hollow even in the hottest days of July and August. The Morelle descends from the Gagny woods, and it really seems to bear along with it the coolness of the foliage under which it flows for many leagues; it carries with it the murmuring noises, the frigid and dreamy shadows of the forest. Nor is the river the only source of coolness. All kinds of running waters sing under the trees, at almost every step springs gush up,—one feels, while following some narrow pathway as though there were subterranean lakes under one's feet, breaking up through the moss, and taking advantage of the smallest fissures at the foot of a tree, or the least crevice between the rocks, to burst out in crystalline fountains. So numerous and so loud are the whispering voices of all these springs, that they drown the songs of the bullfinches. One could well imagine himself in some enchanted park, with cascades falling upon every side.

Below the fields are soaked. Gigantic chestnut trees make black shadows. Bordering the meadows, long curtains of poplar trees display their rustling hangings in line. There are two lanes of enormous plane trees which ascend, across fields, to the old ruined chateau of Gagny.

In that continually watered soil the grasses and herbs grow prodigiously. It is like a garden view,—a flower bed between two planted mounds—but a natural flower garden in which the meadows are the lawns and the giant trees take the place of ornamental shrubs. When the sun falls perpendicularly at noon, the shadows become bluish, the lighted plants slumber in the heat, while trembling breaths of cold air pass under the foliage.

And here it was that old Merlier's mill used to enliven with its tic-tac a spot of wildly beautiful verdure. The building itself, wrought of plaster and plank, seemed old as the world. It was half steeped in the Morcle, which rounds out at that point into a clear basin. A dam had been contrived, and the water fell from the height of a few yards upon the mill wheel, which crackled as it turned with the asthmatic cough of a faithful servant woman grown old in the house. When folks advised old Merlier to replace it, he used to shake his head and declare that a young wheel would be lazy and would not understand the works so well, and he would continue to mend the old one with whatever came to hand,—cask staves, rusty iron, zinc, or lead. The wheel looked all the merrier, with its profile made thus strange, and bedecked with weeds and mosses. When the water whipped it with silver waves, it covered itself with pearls,—one saw its strange carcass turn under

a dazzling array of mother-of pearl necklaces.

The portion of the mill that dipped thus into the Morelle, had the aspect of a barbaric ark, grounded there. One-half of the edifice at least, was built upon piles. The water flowed under the flooring, and there were holes, famous in that part of the country by reason of the enormous eels and crawfish that were caught in them. Below the fall the water was limpid as a mirror, and when it was not disturbed by the foam of the wheel, shoals of big fish could be seen swimming about in it, slowly as sailing squadrons. A broken stairway descended to the river, hard by a stake to which a boat was fastened. There was a wooden gallery above the wheel. Irregularly placed windows pierced the walls. It was all one jumble of angles, little walls, afterthought construction, beams and gables, which gave to the mill the look of an old dismantled citadel. But ivy had grown, and all sorts of climbing plants had closed up the larger fissures and gaps, and had flung a green mantle over the old building. The young ladies who passed that way used to make sketches of old Merlier's mill for their albums.

On the side of the road the house was more solid. A stone gate opened into the great yard, flanked on the right and left by sheds and stables. Near the well, there was an immense elm which covered half the yard with its

shadow In the background the house displayed the four windows of its second story, capped by a dovecot Father Merlier's sole coquetry consisted in having this facade whitewashed once every ten years. It had only just been whitewashed, and at midday, when the sun shone fully upon it, it used to dazzle the village

Old father Merlier had been Mayor of Roerouse for twenty years He was esteemed for the fortune which he had been shrewd enough to amass He was popularly believed to be worth about eighty thousand francs, scraped together sou by sou When he had married Madeleine Guillard, who brought him the mill for her dowry, he had nothing in the world except his two arms. Now, the wife was dead, he remained a widower, and lived all alone with his daughter Françoise. No doubt he might have taken a rest at last, and have allowed the old millwheel to slumber in its moss, but then he would have felt wearily lonesome, and the house would have seemed dead So he kept on working still, just for the pleasure of it. Father Merlier was then a tall old man, with a long taciturn face,—a man who never laughed, but who was at bottom a jolly fellow enough He had been chosen for Mayor partly on account of his money, and partly on account of the fine appearance he knew how to make when performing a marriage ceremony

Françoise Merlier was just eighteen. She did not pass

for one of the handsomest girls in the country because she was slight. Until the age of fifteen she had been even ugly. Nobody at Rocreuse could understand how it was that the daughter of "father" Merlier and "mother" Merlier, both so well to-do, grew up so poorly and with such an woe-begone aspect. But at fifteen, although remaining delicate, she suddenly bloomed out with the prettiest little face in the world. She had black hair, black eyes and was quite rosy withal —her little mouth was always smiling, she had dimples in her cheeks, and a clear forehead that seemed to be wreathed with sunlight. Although weakly compared with other girls in that part of the country, she was not thin —far from it. In calling her weakly people only meant to say that she could not lift a sack of wheat, but she had become quite dimpled with her teens, and finally grew round and dainty as a quail. Still, her father's long spells of silence had made her thoughtful while yet very young. If she laughed constantly, it was only to please other people. At heart she was a very serious girl.

Of course the whole country courted her, and that even more for her money than her pleasing ways. And she had ended by making a choice which scandalized everybody. On the other side of the Morelle lived a tall lad called Dominique Penquer. He was not from Rocreuse

Ten years previously he had arrived from Belgium, as the heir of an uncle who owned a little property on the very borders of the forest of Gagny, right opposite the mill, only a few rifle-shots' distance off. He then said that he had just come to sell that property, and then intended to return home. But it seemed that the country charmed him; for he never stirred from it. He was seen cultivating his little field, harvesting his little crop of vegetables, on which he lived. He fished, he hunted, several times the guards were on the point of arresting him, and instituting proceedings against him. So free a way of living, the resources whereof the peasantry could not very well understand, finally earned him a bad reputation. He was suspected, in a vague sort of way, to be a poacher. At all events he was lazy, for he was often seen lying in the grass asleep, when he ought to have been working. The building he lived in, and the last trees of the forest, did not look at all like the dwelling place of an honest man. If he had been found to have weird relations with the wolves of the ruins of Gagny, the old gossips would not have been a bit surprised. Nevertheless the young girls ventured to take his part sometimes; for he was really superb—the great sinister fellow, supple and tall like a poplar, and very white-skinned, with fair beard and hair that looked like gold in the sun. Now, one fine morning, Françoise had told father

Merlier that she loved Dominique, and that she would never consent to marry any other lad.

One may well imagine what a blow that was to old Merlier! He said nothing according to his custom. His face remained as thoughtful as usual, but that interior good humor of his no longer shone in his eyes. Father and daughter pouted at each other for a whole week. Françoise also became quite grave. What worried old Merlier most of all was how that rascal of a poacher could have managed to bewitch his daughter. Dominique had never come to the mill. The miller set himself to watch, and at last he saw the gallant, on the other side of the Morelle, lying in the grass and pretending to sleep. Françoise could see him from her room. The thing was clear enough now, they had fallen in love by dint of making sweet eyes at each other over the mill wheel.

Meanwhile eight days more rolled by. Françoise became graver and graver. Still father Merlier said nothing. At last one evening without a word, he brought Dominique to the mill himself. Françoise was just setting the table. She did not appear at all surprised and simply laid another knife, fork and plate on the table, but the little dimples in her cheeks showed themselves again and her laugh was heard once more. Father Merlier had been that morning to Dominique's tumble-down house on the

edge of the woods. The two men had talked there for more than three hours, with closed doors and windows. No one ever learned what they said to each other. But it was certain that when father Merlier was leaving he had already begun to treat Dominique like a son. No doubt the old man had found the lad he went to see a really fine fellow, instead of a mere idler hiding in the grass to make love to the girls.

All Rocreuse was in uproar at the news. The women, standing in the doors, could not stop talking about the craziness of father Merlier in thus introducing a scamp into his house. Merlier let them say all they pleased. Perhaps he remembered his own marriage. Neither did he own a son when he married Madeleine and her mill, but that had not prevented him from being a good husband. *Besides Dominique put a stop to all the backbiting, by going so heartily to work that the whole country wondered at him.* It so happened that the miller's hired lad had been drawn in the conscription, and Dominique would not have them hire another in his place. He carried in the sacks himself, drove the cart, fought with the old wheel when she needed coaxing to make her turn—and all this with such good will that folks came to look at him working, just for the pleasure of the thing. Father Merlier laughed with his own silent laugh. He felt quite proud



to have divined the character of the lad. There is nothing like love for giving courage to young folks.

And in the midst of all this hard work, Françoise and Dominique were worshipping each other. They never spoke, but they gazed at one another with smiling tenderness. So far, old Merlier had never so much as hinted at the subject of marriage, and both, respecting this silence, patiently awaited the old man's pleasure. At last, one day, about the middle of July, he had their table set in the middle of the yard, under the big elm tree, and sent an invitation to all his friends in Rocreuse to drop in that evening and take a glass with him. When the yard was thronged, and everybody's glass was ready, old Merlier lifted his own very high, and said —

"I have the pleasure of announcing to you that Françoise will be married to this good fellow here, in a month from to-day — on the feast of Saint Louis."

Then all clinked their glasses together, noisily. Everybody laughed. But father Merlier, raising his voice, continued —

"Dominique, kiss your affianced! Must be done!"

And they kissed each other, both turning very red, while everybody laughed louder than before. It was quite a merry time. A little cask was emptied. Then, when all except intimate friends were gone, there was a quiet

little chat. Night came—a starry and very clear night. Dominique and Françoise, sitting upon a bench beside one another, said nothing. An old peasant talked about war having been declared by the Emperor against Prussia. All the village lads were gone already. Troops had passed by only the evening before. There was going to be some hard fighting.

“Bah!” cried old Merlier, with the egotism of a happy man, “Dominique is a stranger, he will not have to go. And then if the Prussians come he will be here to defend his wife.”

The idea that the Prussians could possibly come seemed an immense joke. The Prussians! They were going to get a good licking and that in short order.

“I’ve seen them already! I’ve seen them already!” repeated the old peasant in his hollow voice.

There was silence for a time. Then glasses were touched once more. Françoise and Dominique had heard nothing, they had taken each other’s hand gently, behind the bench where nobody could see them, and that seemed to them so nice that they remained there dreaming, with eyes fixed upon the dark sky.

What a splendid, lukewarm night it was! The village, on either side of the white road, slumbered with childlike tranquillity. Afar off no sound was audible, save the oc-

casional crowing of a cock that had awakened too soon. From the great neighboring woods came long breaths of wind at intervals, passing over the roofs like caresses. The meadows, with their black shadows, assumed a majestic and solemn look, while all the springs, all the running waters that gushed up in the darkness, seemed like the cool and rhythmic respiration of the slumbering country. From time to time the old mill wheel, dozing, seemed to dream like those old hunting dogs which bark in their sleep, it made crackling noises, talking to itself, rocked by the fall of the Morelle, whose smooth surface gave out a sound musical and sustained as that of organ pipes. Never did a deeper peace rest upon a spot more blest by nature.

## II

Just a month later to the day, on the very eve of Saint Louis, Rocreuse was terror-stricken. The Prussians had beaten the Emperor, and were advancing by forced marches upon the village. For more than a week people passing by along the road had been announcing the coming of the Prussians. 'They are at Lormere!' . "They are at Novelles,"—and by dint of hearing of the rapidity of their coming the Rocreuse folks expected every morning to see them descending from the Gagny woods. Still they did not come. This frightened the people still more. They were certainly going to fall upon the village in the middle of the night and murder everybody.

The night before, a little ere daybreak, there had been an alarm. The inhabitants had been awakened by a great noise of men marching along the road. The women had already fallen upon their knees and were making the sign of the cross, when somebody peeping cautiously through a closed window shutter, had recognized the red trowsers. It was a French detachment. The captain had at once asked for the Mayor of the village, and had remained in the mill, after a chat with old Merher.

The sun rose gayly that morning. It would be hot at noon. A blond brightness glowed above the woods,

while, below, above the meadows, white mists arose. The cleanly and pretty village awoke in the coolness, and the country, with its rivers and springs, had the most loveliness of a nosegay. But none smiled at the beauty of the day. The captain was seen to walk round and round the mill, inspect the neighboring houses, cross to the other side of the Morelle and study the country with a field glass,—father Merlier, who accompanied him, appeared to be giving him explanations. Then the captain had posted soldiers behind walls, behind trees, and in hollows. The body of the detachment camped in the mill yard. So there was going to be fighting? And when old Merlier came back, he was questioned. He gave a long nod, without speaking. Yes, there was going to be a fight.

Françoise and Dominique were then in the yard, watching him. At last he took his pipe out of his mouth, and uttered the simple words

“Ah, my poor children, it is not to-morrow that I will marry you!”

Dominique, with compressed lips, and a wrinkle of anger upon his forehead, raised himself upon his toes once in awhile to fix his eyes upon the Gagny woods, as if he wanted to see the Prussians coming. Françoise, very pale and grave, went and came, furnishing the soldiers whatever they needed. They made soup in a corner of the

yard, and cracked jokes while the meal was being prepared

Meanwhile the captain appeared to be delighted. He had visited the rooms, and the great hall of the mill which looked out upon the river. Now he was sitting by the well, talking with father Merlier.

"Why, this is a regular fortress of yours," he said. "We can hold our own well until evening. The bandits are late. They ought to have been here already."

The miller remained grave. He imagined that he could see his mill flaming like a torch. But he uttered no word of complaint, judging that to be useless. He opened his lips only to reply —

"You ought to make them hide the boat behind the wheel. There is a little hole there it fits into. Perhaps it might be of use" .

The captain gave an order. This captain was a handsome man of forty, tall, with a kindly face. The sight of Françoise and Dominique together seemed to delight him. He interested himself in them, as if he had forgotten all about the coming fight. He followed Françoise with his eyes, and his manner plainly showed that he thought her charming. Then turning to Dominique he asked brusquely —

"So you are not in the army, my lad?"

"I am a stranger," answered the young man.

The captain seemed to think very poorly of this apology. He winked his eyes and smiled. Françoise was pleasanter company than Cannon. Thus seeing him smile, Dominique added —

"I am a stranger, but I can lodge a ball in an apple at five hundred meters. See, there is my hunting rifle behind you."

"You can find use for it," simply replied the captain.

Françoise had drawn near, and Dominique, regardless of all present, took and pressed within his own the little hands she held out to him, as if putting herself under his protection. The captain had smiled again, but he did not utter a word. He remained seated, with his sword between his legs,—his eyes vaguely fixed as in reverie.

It was already 10 o'clock. The heat was intense. A heavy silence fell upon the place. Under the shadow of the sheds in the yard the soldiers began to eat their soup. No sound came from the village, whose inhabitants had barricaded their houses, doors and windows. One dog, left alone in the street, howled dismally. From the woods and the meadows, wilting under the heat, came a distant and prolonged murmur, made up of all kinds of sounds. A cuckoo sang. Then the silence became vaster.

And suddenly, on the slumbering air, burst the report of a rifle. The captain leaped to his feet, the soldiers

abandoned their plates of soup only half emptied. Within a few seconds all were at their posts of combat, the mill was manned from top to bottom. Meanwhile the captain who had directed his glass along the road, had seen nothing, the road stretched away to right and left, desolate and very white. A second shot rang out,—and still there was nothing,—not even a shadow. But turning the other way, the captain perceived on the Gagny side, between two trees, a light fleck of smoke rising up, like a gossamer. The wood otherwise seemed deep and sweet as usual.

"The rascals have taken to the forest," he said  
"They know we are here."

Then the fusillade continued, and became hotter and hotter,—between the French soldiers stationed all about the mill, and the Prussian soldiers hiding behind the trees. The balls whistled over the Morelle without causing any loss on either side. The shooting was irregular, every bush sent forth its flash, and still nothing could be seen except the thin wreaths of smoke, softly swaying in the wind. So it went on for nearly two hours. The captain hummed an air, carelessly Françoise and Dominique, who had remained in the yard, got up from time to time, to peep over the low wall. They were very much interested in a little soldier posted on the bank of the Morelle, behind the carcass of an old boat. He was lying flat upon his belly,



watching, shooting from time to time, after each shot he would slide back into a ditch just behind him, to reload, and his movements were so funny, so cunning, and so supple, that one could not help smiling while looking at him. He must have seen some Prussian at last, for he suddenly rose to his feet and took aim, but before he could fire, he uttered a cry, turned round once, and rolled into the ditch, where his legs quivered for a moment with rigid convulsions like the legs of a chicken after being killed. The little soldier had just received a ball in the chest. He was the first dead. Françoise had instinctively seized Dominique's hands, and pressed it with a nervous squeeze.

"Don't stay there!" cried the captain. "the balls are coming this way."

And in fact a little sharp thud was heard in the old elm, and the end of a broken branch fell down, swinging by a shred. But the two young people did not move, nailed to the spot by the excitement of the spectacle. At the edge of the wood a Prussian had suddenly emerged, as if from a side-scene, beating the air with his hands, and at last falling back. And nothing moved. The two dead men seemed to be sleeping under the great sun, not a soul was visible in all the slumbering country. The very crackling of the fusillade ceased. Only the Morelle was now heard, with its clear murmur.

Father Merlier looked at the captain with an air of surprise, as if to ask him whether it was all over

"Now comes the heavy attack," muttered the latter  
"Take care! don't stay there!"

He had scarcely spoken when a frightful volley was discharged. The great elm was almost cut down,—a shower of leaves fell whirling. Luckily the Prussians had fired a little too high. Dominique dragged, almost carried Françoise away, while father Merlier followed them, crying

"Go into the little cellar, the walls are solid!"

But they did not listen to him. They entered the great hall where a dozen soldiers were waiting in silence behind the closed shutters, watching through the chinks. The captain alone remained in the yard, crouching behind the low wall, while the furious volleys continued. The soldiers he had stationed outside, only yielded the ground foot by foot. Still one after the other, they came in, crawling on all fours, when the enemy dislodged them from their hiding places. Their orders were to gain time, and not to show themselves, so that the Prussians should not know how large a force they had to deal with. Another hour passed. And when a sergeant came in at last, stating there were only two or three men still out, the officer pulled out his watch, muttering

"Let go!"

A rending crash was heard a rattling fire of isolated shots followed. Françoise, trembling from head to foot, had instinctively lifted her hands to her ears,—Dominique peeped out behind the soldiers, and when the smoke had partly cleared away, he saw three Prussians lying on their backs in the middle of the meadow. The others had flung themselves behind the willows and poplars. And the siege began.

For more than an hour the mill was riddled with bullets. They whipped the old walls like a tempest of hail. They could be heard flatterring when they struck the stones, and falling back in the water. They buried themselves in the woodwork with a hollow thud. From time to time a loud crack told that the mill wheel had received a shot. The soldiers inside were now sparing of their shots, they only fired when it was possible to take aim. From time to time the captain looked at his watch. And as a ball splintered its way through a shutter and plunged into the ceiling, he muttered—

"Four o'clock. We shall never be able to hold out!"

And little by little, that terrible fusillade began to shake the old mill. One shutter fell into the water, as full of holes as a piece of lace, and it had to be replaced by a mattress. Old Merlier risked his life almost every

moment in order to make an estimate of the damage done to his poor wheel, whose every crack went to his heart. Ah! the wheel was well done for, this time, he could never mend it again. Dominique had begged Françoise to retire but she wished to remain with him, she was sitting behind a great oaken clothes-press which sheltered her. But a bullet entered the press, making its sides utter a deep sound. Then Dominique placed himself in front of Françoise. He had not yet fired a shot, he held his rifle in his hand, not being able to approach the windows whose whole breadth was occupied by the soldiers. At every volley, the whole floor shook.

"Look out! attention there!" suddenly shouted the captain.

He had just seen a great dark mass issue from the woods. At the same moment an awful platoon firing began. It was as if a water-pout had burst over the house. Another shutter was carried away, and the balls came in, through the yawning aperture. Two soldiers rolled upon the floor. One remained motionless, he was pushed against the wall because he was in the way. The other writhed, begging them to finish him, but no one listened to him, the balls were showering in, every one was looking out for himself, and trying to find some loophole to return the fire through. A third soldier was wounded—thus one uttered

no sound, he let himself fall over the edge of a table, his eyes wild and fixed. Face to face with these three dead, Françoise, seized with horror, had mechanically pushed away her chair that she might sit down upon the floor, against the wall, she thought she would be a smaller mark there, and less in danger. Meanwhile they had taken all the mattresses in the house, and had half plugged the window with them. The hall began to fill with rubbish, broken weapons, wrecked furniture.

"Five o'clock!" said the captain. "Hold out!"  
They are going to try to cross the water."

Just then Françoise uttered a cry. A ball, ricocheting, had grazed her forehead. Some drops of blood appeared. Dominique looked at her for a moment, then approaching the window, he fired his first shot, and thereafter never ceased. He loaded and fired, taking no heed of anything going on around him, only that from time to time, he glanced at Françoise. Furthermore, he never hurried himself, and took careful aim. The Prussians following the line of poplar-trees, tried to cross the Morelle at last, as the captain had predicted, but, so soon as the first of them showed himself, he fell dead, shot through the head by Dominique. The captain who watched this sharpshooting, was astonished. He complimented the young man,—telling him that he would think himself lucky

to have a number of sharpshooters equally skillful. Dominique did not hear him. A ball touched his shoulder, another bruised his arm. And he kept on firing.

Two more fell dead. The mattresses torn to atoms could no longer stop up the windows. A last heavy volley seemed to tear the mill away. The place was no longer tenable. But the officer repeated —

"Hold out!—Half an hour more."

Now he began to count the time by minutes. He had promised his superior officers that he would keep the enemy in check until evening, and he would not retreat the length of a shoe-sole before the hour he had fixed. He retained his amiable manner, smiled at Françoise in order to reassure her. He had taken up the rifle of a dead soldier, and was firing also.

There were now only four soldiers in the hall. The Prussians showed themselves in heavy force upon the other side of the river, and it was evident they might pass the river at any moment. Several minutes passed. The captain remained obstinate, he would not give the order to retreat. A sergeant rushed in, saying

"They are on the road!—they are going to attack us in the rear!"

The Prussians must have found the bridge. The captain pulled out his watch

"Five minutes more," he replied. "They cannot get here in less than five minutes."

Then at 6 o'clock precisely, he at last consented to withdraw his men, by a little door which opened into an alley. From thence, they threw themselves into a ditch, and following its bed, gained the Sauval forest. The captain had saluted old Merher very politely before leaving, with excuses. And he had even added —

"Amuse them! . . . We shall come back."

Meanwhile Dominique had remained alone in the hall. He was still firing, hearing nothing, understanding nothing. He only felt the furious desire to defend Françoise. The soldiers were going, and he had not the least suspicion of it. He kept on, taking aim, and killing his man at every shot. Suddenly, there was a great noise. The Prussians, advancing from the rear, had just entered the mill yard. He fired once more, and they rushed upon him while his rifle was still smoking.

Four men seized him. Others vociferated around him in some frightful language. They were on the point of killing him then and there. Françoise threw herself before them, supplicating them. But an officer entered, and ordered the prisoner to be brought to him. After exchanging a few words in German with the soldiers, he turned to Dominique, and said to him roughly, but in very good French

"You shall be shot within two hours."

## III

It was a rule laid down by the staff of the German army that every Frenchman not belonging to the regular army, and captured with weapons in his possession, should be shot. The volunteer companies themselves were not recognized as belligerents. By making a few terrible examples among the peasantry who sought to defend their homes, the Germans hoped to prevent a general uprising, which they feared. The officer, a tall, bony man, about fifty years old, subjected Dominique to a brief interrogatory. Although he spoke French with great purity, he had all the German stiffness of manners.

"You are a native of this country?"

"No, I am a Belgian."

"Why did you take up arms? All this ought not to concern you."

Dominique did not answer. At that moment the officer noticed Françoise standing by, very pale, listening, her slight wound made a red stripe on her white forehead. He looked at each of the young people in turn, seemed to understand, and contented himself with adding:

"You do not deny that you fired?"

"I fired just as much as I could," tranquilly answered Dominique.



This avowal was needless, for he was black with powder, covered with sweat, and spotted with the drops of blood which had flowed from the wound in his shoulder, grazed by a rifle ball

"Very well," repeated the officer "You shall be shot in two hours "

Françoise uttered no cry She clasped her hands and lifted them in a gesture of dumb despair The officer observed the gesture Two soldiers had led Dominique into a neighboring room, where they had orders to keep him constantly under their eyes The young girl had let herself fall upon a chair, her limbs were yielding under her, she could not weep, she was smothering with emotion Meanwhile the officer continued to watch her Finally he spoke to her —

"Is that lad your brother?" he asked

She answered no by a movement of her head He remained as stiff as ever, without a smile Then, after a brief silence, he continued

"He has lived in this part of the country a long time?"

She answered yes, by another sign

"Then he must be very well acquainted with the neighboring woods? "

This time she spoke.

"Yes, sir," she replied, looking at him with some

surprise

He said nothing further, and simply turned upon his heel ordering them to bring the Mayor of the village to him. But Françoise had arisen, with a slight flush upon her face,—fancying she had divined the purpose of his questions, and feeling a return of hope. She ran herself to find her father.

Just as soon as the firing was over, old Merlier had hurriedly descended by way of the wooden gully to look at his wheel. He adored his daughter, he had the most solid friendship for Dominique, his future son-in-law, but his wheel also occupied a large place in his heart. Since the "little ones" as he called them had got out of the muss safe and sound, he could now devote himself to this other affection, which had suffered considerably, indeed. And leaning over the great wooden carcass he studied the nature of its wounds with a heart broken expression of countenance. Five paddle-boards had been knocked into smithereens, the central framework was riddled. He poked his fingers into the bullet-holes to find how deep they were, he tried to imagine how all these damages could be repaired. Françoise found him already engaged in plugging up chinks with rubbish and moss.

"Father," she said, "they want you!"

And she burst out crying at last as she told him what

she had just heard. Old Merlier shook his head. They could not shoot people like that! He must see about it. And he re-entered the mill with his customary silent and peaceful mien. When the officer demanded of him provisions for the men, he replied that the folks of Rocreuse were not accustomed to brutal treatment, and that nothing could be obtained from them if violence was used. He would take everything upon himself, but only on condition that he was allowed to act without the least interference. At first the officer seemed provoked by this cool manner of speech, but finally he yielded to the sharp brief representations of the old man. He even called him back, to ask —

“What is the name of those woods opposite?”

“The Sauval woods.”

“And how far do they extend?”

The miller looked fixedly at him.

“I do not know,” he replied.

And he departed. An hour later, the war contribution of provisions and money demanded by the officer, was in the mill yard. Night approached. Françoise anxiously watched the movements of the soldiers. She remained near the door of the room in which Dominique was confined. About 7 o'clock, she had to endure a poignant trial, she saw the officer enter the prisoner's room, and for

a quarter of an hour she could hear their voices, rising higher as they talked. Then the officer re-appeared at the threshold for a moment, to give an order in German, which she did not understand, but when twelve men took their places in line in the yard, with their rifles, a trembling seized her, she felt as though she were about to die. All hope was over, then the execution was going to take place. The twelve men stood there for about ten minutes, the voice of Dominique continued to grow louder, as in a tone of violent refusal. Finally the officer came out, slamming the door brutally after him, with the words

"Very well, think over it. . . I will give you until to-morrow morning "

And with a wave of his hand he bade the twelve men break ranks. Françoise remained in stupefaction. Old Merlier who had continued to smoke his pipe, and had been watching the platoon with an air of simple curiosity, now advanced to take her by the arm, with paternal gentleness. He led her to her room.

"Keep yourself quiet," he said,— try to sleep. It will be daylight to-morrow, and we shall see "

As he retired, he looked her in by way of precaution. It was a principle with him that women were good for nothing, and always spoiled everything when they meddled in important business. Meanwhile Françoise did not lie

down. She remained a long time seated upon her bed, listening to all the noises in the house. The German soldiers, camping in the yard sang and laughed, they must have continued eating and drinking until 11 o'clock, for the noise never ceased even for an instant. Even in the mill itself, heavy steps could be heard from time to time, they were relieving the sentries no doubt. But the noises which she could hear in the room immediately below her own, interested her most of all. Several times she lay down upon the floor, and pressed her ear over the chinks in the planking. The room below was the very room in which Dominique was confined. He must have been walking backward and forward between the wall and the window, for she could hear the regular cadence of his steps for a long time, then a great silence came—he must have sat down. Moreover all the other noises ceased, everybody was sleeping. When the whole house seemed to have sunk into a heavy slumber, she opened her window as gently as possible and leaned over the sill. Outside the night was serene and tepid. The thin crescent of the moon, sinking behind the Sauval woods, illuminated the country faintly, as with the gleam of a night light. The lengthened shadows of the tall trees barred the meadows with black, while the grass on the unshaded places seemed to have the softness of green velvet. But Françoise

paid little heed to the mysterious charms of the night. She was examining the country roundabout, looking for the sentries stationed along the shore by the Germans. She could see their shadows distinctly, in echelon far along the Morelle. There was only one in front of the mill, on the other side of the river, standing by a willow whose branches dipped into the water. Françoise could see him plainly. He was a tall youth, who stood motionless with face turned toward the sky, like a shepherd in reverie.

Then when she had carefully inspected the neighborhood, she turned from the window, and sat down upon her bed again. Thus she remained sitting for an hour, absorbed in thought. Then she listened again —not a breath could be heard in the house. She returned to the window and glanced out, but perhaps one of the horns of the moon which still shone behind the trees, made her uneasy, for she continued to wait. At last the hour seemed to have come. The night was perfectly black. she could not see the sentry opposite, the country stretched away like a vast pool of ink. She strained her ears to listen a moment, then decided what to do. There was, very near the window, a ladder of iron bars let into the wall, leading up from the wheel to the granary, and by which the millers used to ascend in order to visit certain parts of the machinery,—but afterward the mechanism had been modified and

the ladder had long ago disappeared under the thick masses of ivy that covered this side of the building

Françoise bravely climbed over the balustrade of her window, clutched one of the iron bars, and swung herself over the void. She commenced to descend. Her petticoats impeded her very much. Suddenly a stone detached itself from the wall and fell into the Morelle with a sonorous splash. She stopped, an icy trembling seized her. But she soon reflected that the continual rumble of the waterfall must at a distance drown all the noises she could make, and she recommenced her descent more boldly, feeling the ivy with her feet, making sure of the iron rungs. When she got as far as the room which had been converted into a prison for Dominique, she stopped. An unforeseen difficulty almost caused her to lose all her courage. The window of the lower room had not been regularly pierced below the window of her own,—it was far away from the ladder, and when she reached out her hand she felt nothing but the wall. Must she then climb back, without being able to carry out her project? Her arms were becoming weary,—the murmur of the Morelle underneath began to make her dizzy. Then she broke off little bits of plaster from the wall, and threw them at Dominique's window. He did not hear —perhaps he was asleep. She still sought for crumbs of plaster, she tore the skin of her fingers. And

she felt her strength leaving her, she was on the very point of falling backward —when Dominique opened his window, at last, gently

“It is I” she whispered —“thy hand! —take me, quick! I am falling”

It was the first time that she had addressed him as “thou” (with the *tutoiement* of affection) He caught her, leaning out, and lifted her into the room. There she had a nervous crisis of tears, trying to smother her sobs, lest they should hear her. Then, with an immense effort, she regained her calm

“You are guarded?” she asked in a whisper

Dominique still bewildered at seeing her thus, simply nodded, and pointed to the door. A sound of snoring could be heard without the sentry, yielding to sleep, must have lain down upon the floor across the threshold, thinking to himself that the prisoner could not move without awaking him

“You must fly!” she said. “I have come to supplicate you to fly, and to bid you adieu”

But he did not seem to hear her. He repeated —

“What! it is you! it is you! Oh! how you frightened me! You might have killed yourself”

He seized her hands and kissed them

“How I love you, Françoise! You are as brave



as you are good! I had only one fear. I was afraid I should die without being able to see you again. But you are here, and now they can shoot me. When I have passed a quarter of an hour with you, I shall be ready "

Little by little, he had drawn her to him, and she nestled her head upon his shoulder. Danger had drawn them closer to each other. They forgot all in that embrace.

"Ah! *Françoise*," continued *Dominique* in his caressing voice;—"to-day is *St. Louis'* day—the longed for day of our marriage. Nothing could separate us, we are here alone, faithful to the rendezvous. Is it not so?—this is our wedding morning "

"Yes, yes," she repeated, "our wedding morning "

They kissed each other, quivering. But suddenly she disengaged herself from his embrace, the terrible reality loomed up before her.

"You must fly! you must fly!" she stammered,—"*do not lose a moment!*"

And as he reached out his arms in the darkness to draw her to him again, she addressed him once more with the *thee-and-thou* of intimate affection.

"Oh! I pray thee, listen to me! . . . If thou diest, I shall die. In one hour more it will be day. I desire thee to fly at once."

Then she rapidly explained her plan. The iron ladder descended to the wheel, from thence he could descend by the paddles and get into the little boat which was placed in a recess below. It would then be easy for him to get to the other side of the river and escape.

"But there must be sentries?" he said.

"Only one, opposite at the foot of the first willow tree."

"And if he should see me?—if he should give the alarm?"

Françoise shuddered. She slipped into his hand a knife she had brought with her. There was a silence.

"And your father?—and you?" replied Dominique. "Ah! no, I cannot fly. Perhaps when I had gone, the soldiers would massacre you all. You do not know what kind of men they are. They offered to pardon me, if I would agree to guide them through the Sauval forest. When they find me gone, they are capable of doing any thing."

The young girl did not waste time in argument. For answer to all his reasoning she simply repeated:

"As you love me, fly! If you love me, Dominique, do not stay here one moment longer."

Then she promised to return to her room. They would never know that she had helped him. Finally she caught

him in her arms and kissed him, in order to coax him—kissed him with a strange burst of passionate affection. He was conquered. He only asked one question more—

“Swear to me that your father knows what you are doing, and that he wishes me to fly?”

“It was my father who sent me to you,” boldly replied Françoise.

She lied. At that moment she only felt one immense desire—to know that he was in safety, to save herself from the hideous thought that the sunrise would be the signal for his death. When he should be far away, anything might happen to her,—whatever might come would seem sweet to her, so that she could only know that he lived. The egotism of her affection desired that he should live at any cost.

“Very well,” returned Dominique, “I shall do as you please.”

Then they ceased speaking to each other. Dominique reopened the window. But a sudden noise chilled them both. The door was shaken, and it seemed to them that it was going to be opened. Evidently some one going the rounds had heard their voices. And both stood there, pressing close to each other, in unspeakable agony. The door was again shaken, but it did not open. Both uttered a sigh of relief, they had been able to comprehend that it

was only the soldier lying across the threshold, who had turned over in his sleep. Silence fell, and the snoring recommenced.

Dominique absolutely insisted that Françoise should first return to her room. He took her in his arms, he bade her a mute farewell. Then he aided her to seize the ladder, and clung to it himself. But he refused to descend one step until he felt assured that she was in her room. When Françoise had re-entered her chamber, she let fall, in a voice low as a breath of wind, the words —

"*Au revoir,—I love thee!*"

She remained at the window, leaning out, she tried to follow Dominique with her eyes, and could not see him, —the willow alone made a pale spot against the darkness. For a moment she could hear Dominique's body rubbing against the *ivy*. Then the wheel cracked, and a light *lapping* sound told her that the young man had found the boat. Another moment, and she could distinguish the dark silhouette of the boat against the gray surface of the Morelle. Then a terrible anguish again seized her by the throat. At every instant she fancied that she heard the alarm cry of a sentry, the least noises, scattering through the darkness, seemed the hurried tread of soldiers, the clash of arms, the sound of the cocking of rifles. Yet the minutes passed, the country preserved its sovereign peace. Domin

ique must have reached the other bank. Françoise could see nothing more. The silence became majestic. And she heard a *trampling of feet*,—a hoarse cry,—the fall of a heavy body. Then the silence became deeper than ever. And cold as though she had felt Death pass by her, she remained face to face with the thick darkness.

## IV

At early dawn, an outburst of voices shook the mill. Father Merlier had opened the door for Françoise. She went down into the yard, pale and very calm. But there, she could not repress a shudder upon seeing before her the corpse of a Prussian soldier, extended upon the ground, near the well, with a cloak spread under him.

Soldiers were standing round the body, gesticulating, shouting in furious tones. Several shook their fists in the direction of the village. Meanwhile the officer had summoned old Merlier before him, as the mayor of the commune.

"See here!" he said to him, in a voice choked by anger,—"*here is one of our men who was found murdered by the river-bank. We must make a severe example, and I expect you to aid us in discovering the murderer.*"

"Whatever you wish," replied the miller, with his phlegm. "*Only it will not be very easy.*"

The officer had bent down to lift a corner of the cloak, which concealed the dead man's face. Then a horrible wound was seen. The sentinel had been struck in the throat, and the weapon remained in the wound. It was a kitchen knife with a black handle.

Luckily his anger prevented him from remarking the

profound alteration of Françoise's face. She had been obliged to sit down upon the stone bench, near the well. In spite of herself, she could not take her eyes from that corpse, lying on the ground almost at her feet. It was a tall and handsome lad, with fair hair and blue eyes who resembled Dominique. The resemblance made her heart sick. She thought that the dead man might have left, far away in Germany, some sweetheart who would weep for him. And she recognized her own knife in the dead man's throat. She had killed him!

"Look at this knife," said the officer to father Merlier,—*"perhaps it will aid us in our investigations."*

The old man started. But he recovered himself immediately, and answered without moving a muscle of his face.

"Everybody has that kind of knives in this part of the country. Perhaps your man was tired of fighting, and did the business for himself. That's plain enough!"

"Silence!" shouted the officer in fury. "I do not know what keeps me from setting fire to the four corners of the village."

Meanwhile the officer was talking of visiting Rocreuse with terrible penalties, when all of a sudden some soldiers ran up to him. The escape of Dominique had just been discovered. This caused the greatest excitement. The

officer visited the spot at once, looked out of the window which had been left open, understood and came back exasperated

Father Merhier seemed very much vexed by Dominique's flight.

"The imbecile!" he muttered,—“he spoils every thing”

Françoise, who heard him, was seized with anguish. Her father, indeed, never suspected her complicity. He shook his head, saying to her in an under tone

‘Now we are in a nice fix!’

“It was that rascal! it was that rascal!” shouted the officer. “He must have got to the woods. But he must be caught for us, or the whole village shall pay for him!”

And, suddenly turning to the miller

“Here! you must know where he is hiding.”

Old Merhier laughed with his silent laugh, pointing to the vast stretch of wooded slopes beyond

‘How could you find a man there?’ he asked

“Oh! there are hollows enough that you know. I will give you ten men. You shall lead them.”

“I am perfectly willing, only it will take us at least eight days to scour all the woods in the neighborhood.”

The old man's coolness enraged the officer. He comprehended, in fact, how ridiculous the idea of such a battue



was. Just then he noticed Françoise seated upon the bench, pale and trembling. The anxious look of the young girl impressed him. He remained silent a moment, examining Françoise and the miller by turns. At last he asked the old man, brutally—

“Is not that fellow your daughter’s lover?”

Old Merlier became livid: one would have thought him about to leap at the officer’s throat to strangle him. He stiffened himself,—he gave no answer. Françoise hid her face with her hands.

“Yes, that is just it!” continued the Prussian. “Either you or your daughter aided him to escape. You are his accomplice. . . For the last time, will you give him up or not?”

The miller did not answer. He turned, and looked away off, indifferently, as if the officer were not speaking to him at all. This excited the anger of the latter to the highest pitch.

“Very well, then,” he shouted, “you shall be shot in his place.”

And he ordered out the platoon to execute the sentence. Old Merlier preserved his usual phlegm. He only shrugged his shoulders the least bit, this sort of dramatic performance seemed to him in very bad taste. Doubtless he never dreamed that a man could be shot so easily as all

that. Then when the platoon was in position, he gravely observed —

"So, this is serious? . . . I am quite willing. If *you must absolutely shoot some one, just as well shoot me as anybody else.*"

But Françoise had arisen, wild with terror, stammering —

"Mercy, sir! do not hurt my father! . . . Kill me in his place. It was I who helped Dominique to escape. I alone am guilty."

"Shut up, child," shouted father Merlier. "What are you lying for? . . . She was locked up in her room all night, sir. She lies! I assure you she lies!"

"No, I am not lying," ardently replied the young girl. "I climbed down by the window, I urged Dominique to fly. It is the truth . . . the whole truth!"

The old man had become very pale. He saw clearly in her eyes that she was not! lying, and the story terrified him. Ah! these children, with their hearts, how they spoil everything! Then he became angry.

"She is mad! Don't listen to her. She is telling you a lot of stupid lies. . . Come, let's end this business!"

She wanted to protest again. She knelt down, she clasped her hands. The officer quietly looked on at this painful scene.

"My God," he cried at last, "I take your father only because I have not got the other man      Try to find the other, and I let your father go "

She looked at him a moment, with eyes made big by the atrocity of the proposition

"It is horrible," she muttered      "How could I find Dominique at this hour? He is gone—I do not know where "

"Very well, choose! Either he or your father?

"Oh, my God! how can I choose!      But even if I knew where Dominique was, I could not choose!      Ah! You are tearing my heart out! I would rather die at once Yes, it would be sooner over      Kill me, I pray you—I beg you, kill me!      "

This scene of despair and tears put the officer out of patience at last      He shouted

"Enough of this! I wish to be just      I am willing to give you two hours more      If, in two hours your lover is not here, your father shall pay for him."

And he bade them take father Merlier to the room which had been used as a prison for Dominique. The old man asked for some tobacco and began to smoke. Upon his impassive face no trace of emotion was legible      But when he was alone, even as he smoked, two great tears trickled slowly down his cheeks. His poor, dear child,

how she was suffering!

Françoise had remained in the centre of the yard. Prussian soldiers passed by laughing. Some flung epithets at her, uttered jests she did not understand. She gazed at the door through which her father had just disappeared. And, with slow gesture, she raised her hand to her forehead, as if to keep it from bursting.

The officer turned upon his heel, repeating

"You have two hours!—try to utilize them!"

She had two hours. The words buzzed through her brain. Then, mechanically, she left the yard, she walked straight before her. Where was she to go? What was she to do? She did not even try to adopt a plan, feeling only too well the futility of her efforts. Still, she would have liked to see Dominique. They could have put their minds together, they would perhaps have been able to devise an expedient. And with her thoughts thus all confused she descended the bank of the Morelle, which she crossed just below the lock, at a place where there were big stones. Her feet brought her under the first willow, at the corner of the meadow. As she bent down, she saw a pool of blood that made her turn pale. That was indeed the place. And she followed Dominique's track in the trampled grass. He must have run,—there was a line of great footsteps cutting bias-wise across the meadow. Then,

further off, she lost these tracks. But in a neighboring field she thought she found them again. This brought her to the edge of the woods, where all indications disappeared.

Nevertheless Françoise advanced under the trees. It relieved her to be alone. She sat down a moment. Then remembering that the hour was passing away, she rose up again. How long was it since she had left the mill? Five minutes?—half an-hour? She had lost all knowledge of time. Perhaps Dominique had gone to hide himself in a thicket she knew of,—where they had eaten nuts together one afternoon. She went to the thicket, visited every part of it. Only a thrush flew away, uttering his sweet sad cry. Then she thought that he might have taken refuge in a certain rocky hollow, where he used to lie in wait for game, but the rocky hollow was empty. What was the use of looking for him?—she would never find him,—and then, little by little, the desire to find him increased with passionate force, she walked faster. The idea suddenly occurred to her that he might have climbed up a tree. Then she walked on with uplifted eyes,—and, in order that he might know she was near him, she called him every fifteen or twenty steps she took. Cuckoos answered her, breezes playing through the trees made her imagine that he was there and was coming down. But

she even fancied that she saw him —she paused, with a rising in her throat, an impulse to run away. What was she going to say to him? Had she come there only to bring him back and have him shot? Oh! no, she would not speak of those things at all. She would call out to him to run away,—not to remain in the neighborhood. Then the thought of her father waiting for her caused her a sharp pang. She threw herself upon the turf, weeping, and crying aloud

“My God! my God! why am I here?”

She was mad to have come there! And, as if smitten with terror, she ran, she sought to leave the forest. Three times she lost her way, and she thought that she would never be able to find the mill again, when she came out upon a meadow, exactly opposite the village of Roceuse. As soon as she saw the village, she stopped. Was she indeed to return alone?

She was still standing there, when a voice called her gently

“Françoise! Françoise!”

And she saw Dominique’s head peering above the edge of a ditch. Just God! She had found him! Then Heaven indeed willed that he should die! She smothered a cry, and let herself glide down into the ditch.

“Thou wert looking for me?” he asked.

"Yes," she answered, her head whirling, not knowing what she said

"Ah! what is the matter?"

She lowered her eyes, she stammered

"Why, nothing . . . I was uneasy, I wanted to see you "

Then, set at rest, he told her that he had not been able to make up his mind to go away. He was frightened about them. Those villains of Prussians were quite capable of revenging themselves upon women and old men. Well, everything was all right, and he added, laughing

"The wedding will be eight days from now—that's all "

Then as she remained agitated as ever, he became serious again

"But what is the matter with thee? thou art hiding something from me?"

"No, I swear to thee! I ran to get here "

He kissed her, telling her it would be very imprudent for both her and himself to talk any longer, and he was about to climb out of the ditch in order to re-enter the forest. She held him back. She was trembling

"Listen, thou wouldst perhaps do well to remain where thou art. No one is looking for thee, thou fearest nothing "

"Françoise, thou art hiding something from me!" he repeated.

Again she swore she was hiding nothing from him. Only, she would rather know that he was near her. And she stammered other reasons. She seemed to him to act so strangely that he would now have refused to go away. Besides he believed the French would return. The troops had been seen on the other side of Sauval.

"O that they may hasten! that they may come as soon as possible!" she exclaimed, with fervor.

At that moment 11 o'clock sounded from the steeple of Rocreusc. The strokes came, clear and distinct. She rose in terror. Two hours had passed since she left the mill.

"Listen," she said quickly, "if we have need of thee, I shall go up to my room, and shake my handkerchief."

And she departed running while Dominique, very uneasy, stretched himself over the edge of the ditch in order to watch the mill. As she was going into Rocreusc, Françoise met an old beggar, Father Bontemps, who knew the country well. He saluted her—he had just seen the miller in the midst of the Prussians,—then making the sign of the cross, and muttering broken words, he went on his way.

"The two hours are over!" said the officer, when



Françoise appeared

Old Merlier was there, sitting on the bench near the well. He was still smoking away. The young girl again supplicated, wept, knelt. She wanted to gain a little time. The hope of seeing the French return, had increased within her, and even while lamenting, she fancied that she could hear afar off the cadenced tread of an army. Oh! if they would only come!—if they could only save them all!

“Listen, sir! One hour one hour more. You can surely give us one hour!”

But the officer remained inflexible. He even ordered two men to take hold of her and take her away, so that they could proceed quietly with the execution of the old man. Then a frightful struggle took place in the heart of Françoise. She could not leave her father to be murdered thus. No! no!—she would rather die with Dominique, and she was rushing toward her room,—when Dominique himself entered the yard.

The officer and the soldiers uttered a cry of triumph. But he, as though there were no one there except Françoise, walked directly to her, quite calm, slightly severe.

“This is bad!” he said. “Why did you not bring me back? I had to find out how things were from Father Bontemps. Well, I am here!

"they are going to kill him!"

The miller drew her to him and took her upon his knees, like a child

At the same moment the officer came out, while behind him, two men led out Dominique.

"Never! never!" shouted the latter,—*"I am quite ready to die!"*

"Think well," returned the officer *"The service you refuse me, will be rendered by another I offer you your life, I am generous It is merely a question of guiding us to Montredon through the woods There must be paths ways"*

Dominique returned no answer

*'Then you remain obstinate?'*

"Kill me, and finish the matter," he replied

Françoise, with clasped hands supplicated him from afar off She forgot everything, she would even have counseled him to commit a cowardice. But father Merlier seized her hands, lest the Prussians should see that wild womanly gesture

"He is right," he murmured. *"Better to die!"*

The platoon was there for the execution The officer expected Dominique to weaken He still reckoned upon changing his resolution. There was a silence Afar off, violent claps of thunder were heard A heavy heat crush

ed down the country And in that silence the cry rang out

"The French! the French!"

It was they, indeed On the Sauval road at the edge of the woods, the line of red trousers could be seen There was an extraordinary excitement in the mill The Prussian soldiers ran hither and thither, with guttural exclamations From without not a single shot had yet been fired.

"The French! the French!" cried *Françoise*, clapping her hands.

She was like one mad She had escaped from her father's embrace, and laughed, tossing her arms in air They were coming at last, and they were coming in time, for *Dominique* was still standing there!

A terrible platoon volley which burst upon her ears like a thunderclap, caused her to turn The officer had just said

"First of all, let us settle this business!"

And with his own hands pushing *Dominique* against the wall of a shed, he had given the word of command to fire When *Françoise* had turned, *Dominique* was lying on the ground, his breast riddled by twelve balls.

She did not weep She stood there stupidly. Her eyes became fixed, and she went to sit down under the shed, a few steps away from the body. She stared at it.

Sometimes she made a vague and childish gesture with her hand. The Prussians had seized old Merlier as a hostage.

It was a fine fight. Rapidly the officer posted his men, knowing that he could not retreat without being crushed. It was just as well to sell his life dearly. Now it was the Prussians who were defending the mill, and the French who were attacking it. The fusillade began with unparalleled violence. For one whole hour it never ceased. Then a heavy crash was heard, and a round shot smashed a main branch of the ancient elm-tree. The French had cannon! A battery, trained just above the ditch where Dominique had hidden, swept the Rocreuse highroad. The fight could not now last long.

Ah! the poor mill! Cannon shot pierced it through and through. One-half of the roof was carried away. Two walls crumbled down. But it was especially upon the Morelle side that the disaster became lamentable. The ivy, torn from the quivering walls, hung down like rags, the river carried away debris of all kinds, and, through a breach could be seen the chamber of Françoise, with its bed, whose white curtains had been carefully drawn. The old wheel received two cannon-shot, one after the other, and uttered a last groan, the paddleboards were carried away by the current, the carcass crushed in.

The merry mill had just given up its ghost!

Then the French stormed the mill. There was a furious fight with cold steel. Under the rust-colored sky the valley of slaughter filled itself with dead. The vast meadows wore a weird look, with their great isolated trees, their curtains of poplars which sported them with shade. To right and left the forests were like the walls of a circus hemming in the combatants, while the springs, the fountains, and running waters uttered a sound of sobbing in the panic of the land.

Under the shed Françoise had not moved,—crouching before the body of Dominique. Farther Merber had just been killed upon the spot by a spent ball. Then when the Prussians had been exterminated, and the mill was burning, the French captain entered first into the yard. Since the commencement of the campaign, it was the only success he had been able to win. So, inflamed with his triumph, making taller his tall stature, he laughed in his amiable, handsome-cavalier way. And beholding Françoise, imbecile, between the corpses of her husband and of her father, in the midst of the smoking ruins of the mill, he saluted her gallantly with his sword, crying

“Victory! victory!”

(*The New Orleans Times-Democrat* Aug. 20 & 27 1882)

## A PEASANT'S DEATH

## A PEASANT'S DEATH

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[*Le Peuple*, June 20 1890]

JEAN LOUIS Lacour is seventy years of age. He was born at Courteille, a hamlet of one hundred and fifty inhabitants, in the midst of a region haunted by wolves. During his whole life he only once visited Angers, fifteen leagues distant, but he was then so young that he does not remember anything about it now. He had three children—two sons, Antoine and Joseph, and one daughter, Catherine. Catherine married, her husband died, and she returned to her father's house with a little boy twelve years old, Jacquinet. The family lives upon five or six acres of land, just enough to enable them to earn their bread and clothe their nakedness. When they drink a glass of wine, they sweated for it.

La Courteille is in the heart of a little valley, with woods all about it, closing it in and hiding it. There is no church there, the community is too poor. It is the curé of Cormiers who comes there to say mass, and as he has two long leagues to travel he only comes every fifteen days. The houses, comprising a score of rickety buildings, are scattered along the public road. Chickens scratch

ding in front of the doors. When a stranger passes by, the women all strain their necks to look at him, while the children wallowing in the sunlight, take to flight together with troops of terrified geese



Jean Louis has never been sick. He is tall and knotty as an oak. The sun has dried and baked and cracked his skin, and he has acquired the color, the rugged hardness and the calm of the trees. Growing old, he has lost his tongue. He does not talk any more, finding that to be useless. He walks with a slow and obstinate step, with quiet strength like the oxen.

Only last year he was yet stronger than his sons, he reserved all the heavy work for himself, and toiled silently in his field, which seemed to know him and tremble. But one day about two months ago, he fell and lay for two long hours across the furrows, like a fallen tree. Next day he wished to go back to work, but all of a sudden his arms failed him, the earth no longer obeyed him. His sons shake their heads. His daughter tries to keep him in the house. He is obstinate, and so they make Jacquinet accompany him, with orders to call out for help if grand father falls.

"What are you doing here, lazybones!" growls Jean



Louis finding that the lad never leaves him alone for a moment "At your age I was able to earn my own living"

"Grandfather, I am taking care of you," replies the child

And this answer gives the old man a sudden shock. He says nothing more. When he comes home in the evening he lies down and does not get up any more. Next morning when the sons and daughter start for the fields, they come in to look at father, because they do not hear him move. They find him extended upon his bed, his eyes open, looking like one who is thinking about something. His skin is so hard and so tanned that they cannot even guess what makes him sick by its color.

"Well, dad things don't go right with you, eh?"

He grumbles and shakes his head.

"Then you won't come, we'll go without you?"

Yes, he makes them a sign to go without him. The harvesting has begun, and all arms are needed for the work. For, if a mowing were lost, it might happen that a sudden storm would carry the sheafs away. Even little Jacquinet follows his mother and his uncles. Father Lacour is left alone. In the evening when the children come back they find him in the same place, always lying on his back with his eyes open, and looking as if he were thinking about something.

"So you don't feel any better, dad?"

No, he does not feel any better. He grumbles and shakes his head. What can be done for him? Catherine conceives the idea of boiling some wine with some herbs, but it is too strong, it almost kills him. Joseph says better wait and see tomorrow, and all go to bed.

\* \* \*

Next day, before they go out to the harvesting the two sons and the daughter come to the bedside for a moment. The old man is decidedly sick. He never remained so long on his back before. Perhaps it would be better in any case to get the doctor. But the trouble is that one must go to Rougemont for that—six leagues there and six leagues back, that is twelve! A whole day's work would be lost. The old man, who is listening to his children's talk, seems to be annoyed and even getting angry. He does not want any doctor—that would do him no good and would cost money.

"So you won't have a doctor?" asks Antoine. "Very well, then, we'll go to work."

Of course let them go to work. Certainly they would do him no good by staying there. The ground needs taking care of more than he. And three days roll by, the children go to work every morning, Jean Louis remains

alone, never moving, except to drink from the pitcher when he is thirsty. He is like one of these old horses who fall exhausted in some corner and are left to die there. He has worked for sixty years, and it is just as well for him to go, now that he is good for nothing except to occupy room that others might fill better and to bother every body about him.

The children themselves do not feel very sorry. The earth has reconciled them to these things; they are too near it to wish to take the old man from it. They take a look at him in the morning, and another look at him in the evening, that is all they can do. If father gets on his legs again it will show that he is mighty tough. If he dies it will be because he had death right in his body, and anybody knows that when you have death right in your body nothing will drive it out, neither signs of the cross nor medicines. If it was a cow—that would be different, because a cow must be looked after.

In the evening Jean Louis interrogates the children with a look about the harvesting. When he hears them reckoning up the number of sheafs, telling of the fine weather so favorable for the work, his eyes shine with joy. They begin to talk about going for the doctor, but the old man gets angry, and they are afraid to vex him any more, as that might kill him sooner.

He only asks for the garde champetre, his old comrade. Old father Nicholas, the garde champetre, is his senior, for he was seventy five years old last Candlemas. He is still straight as a poplar. He comes and sits down beside Jean-Louis with a serious face. Jean-Louis, who can no longer speak, looks at him with his small dull eyes. Father Nicholas also looks at him, for he has nothing to say. And these two old men remain thus face to face for more than an hour without uttering a word, happy to see each other, recollecting, doubtless, many old things which happened in the long ago. The same evening the children, coming home from the harvesting, find father Lacour dead, lying on his back stiff and cold, with his eyes turned up.

Yes, the old man is dead, without having moved a limb. He has breathed out his last breath, a breath more added to the vast breath of the country. Like the animals which hide away and resign themselves to die, he has not even bothered a neighbor, he has managed his little affair all by himself.

"Father is dead!" says the eldest son, Antoine, summoning the rest.

And all Joseph, Catherine and Jacquinet, repeat  
"Father is dead!"

It does not surprise them. Jacquinet stretches his head forward curiously, the woman pulls out her handker

chief, the two boys walk about in silence with grave faces that grow pale under the tan. Anyhow he lasted splendidly, he was pretty solid still, *was old dad!* And the children console themselves a little with the idea. They are proud of the family solidity.

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That night they sit up with father until 11, then all yield to sleep, and Jean Louis is again all alone, with that motionless face of his, which still looks as if he were thinking about something.

Early at dawn Joseph starts for Les Cormiers in order to notify the curé. Nevertheless as there are still some sheafs to take in, Antoine and Catherine go to the field as usual in the morning leaving Jacquinet to watch the body. *The little fellow gets fidgety at being all alone with the old man who does not even move, so he slips out to the highroad from time to time, throws stones at the sparrows, watches a peddler showing kerchiefs to two of the women neighbors;—then when he thinks about grandpa, he runs back quickly to make sure that he does not stir yet, and then steals out again to look at two dogs fighting.*

As he leaves the door open, the chickens come in, and walk about calmly, pecking the beaten-down earth which forms the floor. A red cock struts, stretches his neck,

stares roundly with his charcoal eyes—suspicious of this body whose presence he cannot explain, he is a prudent and sagacious cock who probably knows well that the old man is not in the habit of staying in bed after sunrise,—finally he utters his sonorous clarion-cry chanting the old man's death, while the hens go out one by one, clucking and pecking the ground

The curé of Cormiers cannot come till 5 o'clock. Since quite early in the morning the cartwright has been heard sawing deal and driving in nails. Those who did not know the news then say — "Hello! Jean Louis must be dead!"—for the folks at La Courteille know those sounds well.

Antoine and Catherine return from the fields, the harvest is over, they cannot grumble, for the wheat crop has not been so fine in ten years

The whole family waits for the priest, they do something in order to kill time. Catherine puts the soup on to boil, Joseph goes for water, Jacquinet is sent to see if the grave has been dug in the cemetery. At last just at 5 o'clock the priest comes. He is in a light coat, with a lad who serves him as clerk. He gets out at the door of the Lacours, takes his stole and surplice out of a newspaper, then he puts them on, exclaiming

"Let us be quick! I must be back by 7 o'clock."

Nevertheless no one hurries. The two neighbors must be sent for who are to carry the body upon the old black wooden bier. At last, just as they are going to start, Jacquinet runs in shouting that the hole is not yet finished, but that they can come all the same.

\*       \*       \*

Then the priest goes first, reading some Latin from a book. The little clerk follows him carrying an old holy water vessel of embossed copper, with an aspergillum in it. It is only when they get to the middle of the village that another boy comes out of the grange, where mass is said every fifteen days, and takes the head of the procession with a crucifix tied to the end of a stick. The family walks behind the corpse, little by little all the village folks join in, a straggling line of gawks, bareheaded, ragged and shoeless, forms the tail end.

The cemetery is at the other end of La Courteille. So the two neighbors are obliged to put the bier down at intervals, they pant and blow while the procession stops, and they start again. The trampling of wooden shoes on the hard ground is heard. When they get to the cemetery they find that the hole is not yet finished, the grave-digger is down in the hollow of it, they can see his head every time he rises to fling out a spadeful of earth, regularly ap-

peering and disappearing

A common hedge incloses the cemetery. Briars grow there, and the children come in September to eat the blackberries. It is like a garden in the middle of the country. At the further end there are enormous gooseberry bushes, a pear tree in one corner has become as big as an oak, a short alley of lime trees in the middle makes a pleasant shade, under which the old men come in summer to smoke their pipes. The sun burns, the grasshoppers take flight, golden flies buzz in the gasping heat and the silence quivers and trembles with life, the sap of the fat soil blooms in the red blood of the poppies.

They have put down the coffin beside the hole. The urchin who carried the crucifix has stuck it into the ground at the dead man's feet, while the priest standing at his head continues to read Latin out of his book. But the bystanders are most interested in the work of the grave digger. They surround the grave, following the spade with their eyes, and when they look round the curé and the two boys are gone, only the family remain, waiting patiently.

A last the grave is dug.

"That's deep enough, never mind any more digging!" cries one of the peasants who carried the body.

And everybody helps to lower the coffin down. Old



father Lacour will feel all right in that hole. He knows the earth and the ground knows him. They will get along together first rate. It is nearly sixty years ago since she first *made this rendezvous with him, the day he touched her with his first pickaxe blow*. Their mutual love and affection ought to have ended thus,—now the earth must take him and keep him. And what a good long rest he is going to have. He will only hear the light feet of the birds hopping through the grass. No one will walk over him he will lie there in his corner for many a long year before any one disturbs him. It is death sungilded, the everlasting sleep in the great peace of country life

\*     \*     \*

The children come to the edge of the grave. Catherine, Antoine and Joseph throw it upon the "old man" Jacquemet, who has been gathering poppy flowers, throws his boquet in also. Then the family go home to eat their soup, the cattle return from the fields, the sun sets, and the village sinks to sleep in the warmth of the summer night

*(In translating the above, much of the force of the original is lost, as it is impossible to translate the colloquial phraseology of the French peasant, or reproduce in another tongue the peculiar color of his ideas. The translator has*

## **A RICH MAN'S DEATH**

## A RICH MAN'S DEATH

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[*Le Figaro*, August 1 1889]

THE Count of Verteuil is 50 years old. He belongs to one of the most illustrious families of France and possesses a vast fortune. Sulky with the government, he occupied himself as best he could in writing articles for the heavy reviews, which made him a member of the Academie des Sciences Morales et Politiques—he devoted himself to great business speculations, he successively became an enthusiast in agriculture, in stock raising and in fine arts. Once he even got himself elected as deputy, and distinguished himself by the violence of his opposition to the government party.

The Countess Mathilde de Verteuil is thirty six years of age. She is spoken of as the most adorable blonde in Paris. *Advancing years seem only to whiten her skin.* She used to be a little thin, now her shoulders have ripened and taken the roundness of silky fruit. Never has she been so beautiful as now. When she enters a drawing room with her golden hair and satin skin, she seems like a star at its rising, and women of twenty are jealous of her.

The domestic life of the Count and Countess is one of

often for hours at a time, or else he gazes fixedly before him as though he were reflecting upon his solitude.

In society the Countess says that her husband is a little indisposed. She has not altered her course of life in the least,—she eats, sleeps, and drives out at the usual hours. Every morning and every evening she goes herself to ask the Count how he is.

“Eh bien! do you feel better, *mon ami*?”

“*Mais oui!*—a little better, thank you, *chère Mathilde*.”

“If you wish, I will remain with you?”

“No it is useless. Julien Françoise suffice. What would be the use of fatiguing yourself?”

Privately they understand each other, they have lived apart and they wish to die apart. The Count feels that bitter pleasure of the egotist who wishes to pass away alone, without being annoyed by any comedies of grief about his bed. He wishes to abridge the unpleasantness of the last *tele-à tele* as much as possible, both for himself and the Countess. His last will is to disappear from the world with propriety, like a man of the world, who does not want to annoy, or to disgust anybody with his agony.

At last, however, an evening comes when he can no longer get his breath, he knows he will not be able to live through the night. Then, when the Countess comes up to

pay her customary visit, he says to her with a last feeble smile

"Do not go away . . . I do not feel well "

He wishes to spare her the remarks of people . . . She, on her side, was expecting such an announcement and she seats herself in the room. The physician can no longer leave the bedside of the agonizing man . . . The two servants finish their duties with the same silent haste . . . The children, Blanche and Fernand, had been sent for . . . They remain with their mother, near the bed . . . Other relatives are in the next room . . . Half the night thus passes by in solemn expectation, the ceremonial is fulfilled,—the Count can die.

But he will not hurry himself . . . he seems to find strength enough to avoid a convulsive or noisy death. In the vast severe room his breathing is like the broken sounds of a clock out of order . . . It is a well brought-up man about to die . . . And when he has kissed his wife and children he repels them from him with a last gesture, falls back with his face to the wall and dies alone

Then one of the doctors bends down, closes the eyes of the dead man, and announces in a deep whisper

"All is over! "

Sighs and soba break the silence . . . The Countess, Fernand and Blanche are kneeling down. They are weep-

ing through their hands, their faces cannot be seen. Then they retire, the two children leading their mother, who, on reaching the door, balances her waist in a final sob in order to show her despair. And from this moment the dead is abandoned to the pomp of his obsequies.

The doctors have departed, rounding their backs and trying to look vaguely sad. A priest has been sent for in all haste to the parish church, to watch with the body. The two servants remain with the priest seated upon chairs, stiff and dignified, this is the last service expected of them. One sees a spoon that had been forgotten on the mantel piece, he rises and slips it into his pocket in order that the perfect order of the room may not be disturbed.

Early at dawn a noise of hammers is heard in the great drawing room below, it is the sound made by the upholsterers who are converting this salon into a mortuary chapel, with a monumental catafalque in the center of it. The whole day is taken up with the work of embalming, the doors are locked, the embalmer and his assistant are left alone. Next day when the Count is brought down stairs and exposed upon the catafalque, he is in full dress, with the fresh color of youth upon his face.

On the morning of the funeral from the hour of ten, the house is filled with the low murmur of discreet voices. The sons and sons-in-law of the defunct receive the crowd

in a parlor of the ground floor, they bow silently, they maintain the dumb politeness of afflicted persons. All upper society is represented there—the nobility, the army, the magistrature;—there are even senators and academicians.

At last, about 10 o'clock, the procession takes its way to the church. The hearse is a first class vehicle, plumed with sable feathers, draped with silver fringed hangings. The cords of the pall are held by a marshal of France, a Duke, who was an old friend of the deceased, an ex minister, and a member of the academy. Fernand de Verteuil and M. de Bussac are chief mourners. Then comes the cortege, a stream of persons all gloved and cravated with black, all highly important personages who breathe hard at being obliged to walk upon the pavement, and who march with the dull tread of a flock of sheep suddenly turned loose.

The whole curious population of the quarter is at its windows, people stand back upon the sidewalks, take off their hats, and shake their heads as they see the triumphal hearse go by. Traffic is interrupted by the interminable procession of mourning carriages, nearby all empty, omnibuses, cabs, carts, are blocked at the cross streets, the swearing of drivers and the impatient cracking of whips is heard. And during all this time the Countess de Verteuil remains locked up in her room, in order that people

may say she is broken down with grief. Lying upon an extension-chair, she is really playing with the tassel of her belt, and with eyes fixed upon the ceiling finds comfort in happy reveries.

The ceremonies at the church last nearly two hours. All the clergy are excited, since early morning one could see nothing but busy priests running here and there in their surplices, giving orders, wiping their foreheads and blowing their noses with a loud noise. In the centre of the nave, all hung with black, flame the lights of a mortuary chapel. At last the procession is seated--the women on the left, the men on the right, and the organ rolls out its lamentation, the singers moan in undertones, the choir boys sing with sharply robbing quivers and trills, while in the cressets tall green flames are burning, adding their funereal light to the pomp of the ceremony.

"Is not Faure going to sing?" asks a deputy of his neighbor.

'Yes, I believe so,' replies the latter, an ex-prefect and superb-looking man who smiles at the ladies from afar off.

And when the voice of the great singer quivers through the vibrating nave

"Ah! what a style! what volume there is in that voice!"--the ex-prefect adds in a whisper, nodding his head in ecstasy.



The congregation is ravished The ladies with a vague smile upon their lips, dream of Opera nights That Faure has real talent! A friend of the deceased even goes so far as to say

"He never sang better It is unfortunate poor Ver teuil cannot hear him now, he was so fond of him!"

The chanters in black capes pass around the catafalque, a score of priests complicate the ceremonial, bowing, reiterating Latin phrases, waving aspergillums Finally the mourners file before the coffin, passing the holy water sprinklers from one to the other And all leave the church after shaking hands with the family The daylight without almost blinds the crowd

It is a beautiful June day Gossamer threads float the warm air Before the church there is pushing and crowding Those who do not wish to remain with the mourners disappear It is long before the procession can return Far off, at the end of the street one can just see the plumes of the hearse waving and dwindling away in distance, although the square is still all blocked up with carriages. One can hear the noise of carriage-doors clapped to, and the rapid clatter of horses trotting over the pavement Nevertheless the carriages at last get into line, and the convoy moves to the cemetery

The folks in the carriages loll back at their ease. One

might suppose they were going to the Bois, slowly, through vernal Paris. As the hearse is no longer visible, the funeral has already been forgotten, and conversations begin—the ladies talk about the summer season, the men about their business affairs.

"Tell me, love, will you go to Dieppe again this year?"

"Yes, perhaps, but certainly not before August. We leave on Saturday for our country seat on the Loire."

\* \* \*

' Then *mon cher* he intercepted the letter, and they fought,—oh, not very desperately,—just a little scratch. I dined with him *au cercle* in the evening, and he even won twenty five louis of me "

\* \* \*

"Yes, the stockholders meet the day after tomorrow. They want to put me on the committee, but I am so busy I do not know whether I will be able to go " . . .

The procession, for a moment, follows an alley of trees. Cool shadows fall from the branches, the sunlight hymns its joy through all the verdure. Suddenly a thoughtless lady, leaning out of her carriage, cries out

"My!—this is lovely!"

For the procession is passing into the Montparnasse

cemetery. Voices are hushed, only the grinding of the wheels over the sand of the alleys can be heard. They must go to the other end, the Verteuil sepulchre is there, on the left, a great tomb of white marble, a sort of chapel, highly decorated with carving. The coffin is set down before the gate of this chapel, and the discourses begin.

There are four. The ex minister reviews the political life of the deceased, whom he represents as a sort of unrecognized genius, who could have saved France had he not despised intrigue. Then a friend tells of the private virtues of the dead Count 'for whom all alike weep.' Then somebody, whose name nobody knows, speaks as the delegate of an Industrial Society of which the Count had been honorary member. Last of all, a little grayfaced man discourses in the name of the *Academie des Sciences Morales et Politiques*.

Meanwhile those present amuse themselves by looking at the neighboring tombs, and read the names on the marble slabs. Those who listen at all only catch occasional words. One old man with hard compressed lips catches the phrases 'fine qualities of heart, the generosity and goodness of great natures' and shakes his head muttering —

'Very fine! oh yes! but I knew him!—the played-out dog!'

The last farewell is given. The priests have blessed the body, everybody goes away,—only the grave-diggers remain in this solitary place to lower the coffin. The ropes creak, the oaken bier cracks. Monsieur le Comte de Verteuil is at home!

And the Countess, lying upon her extension chair has not even moved. She is still playing with the tassels of her belt, with her eyes fixed upon the ceiling,—lost in some revery that has little by little brought a rich blush out upon her blonde cheeks.

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THE END